

IDEAS OF POWER IN THE PHILIPPINES

Amulets and Sacrifice

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ABSTRACT

This article examines beliefs about men of supernatural power on the Philippine island of Bohol. As has been pointed out, these beliefs are quite parallel to what Benedict Anderson has described for Java, especially with regard to the requirements of ascetic practices for accumulating and retaining the supernatural powers. Particular for the Philippine case, however, is the way that this asceticism is understood through a notion of 'sacrifice', explicitly linked to Christian imagery and with strong moral overtones. This moral emphasis may be linked to another dimension where the Philippine material diverges from what Anderson describes, namely the question of legitimacy. In the Philippines, issues of legitimacy are more complex, and this means that political and supernatural forms of power—while related—must not be conflated.

Key Words ◇ amulets ◇ Benedict Anderson ◇ asceticism ◇ legitimacy ◇ Philippines ◇ power ◇ sacrifice ◇ Southeast Asia

Introduction

Benedict Anderson's 1972 article, 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture', has had a profound impact on Southeast Asian studies. His theory of a specific Javanese concept of power, radically different from the western notion, has been taken up by researchers working in other parts of the region, and found to be useful for explaining cultural ideas in these areas. As will become apparent from my article, Anderson's ideas are for instance quite helpful for explaining certain aspects of the beliefs in the magical protection by amulets that are widespread in the Philippines. Shelly Errington (1990: 41–7) extends Anderson's thesis by applying it to all of insular Southeast Asia.

According to this view, the Southeast Asian concept of power refers to

a concretely existing divine energy suffusing the universe—in contrast to the western notion of viewing power as simply an abstract aspect of a relationship. This power can be concentrated and accumulated through practices of asceticism, certain rituals, and the possession of powerful objects. For the person who is successful at accumulating such power, wealth and followers will naturally follow—as the consequences and not as the causes of power. Anderson (1972: 22) likens the successful Javanese polity to a reflector lamp, with the most intense light concentrated at the center and gradually diminishing as it reaches downwards. Similarly, it is the power of the ruler at the center that is the source of all power at lower levels of the hierarchy. In this conception of power, the notion of a social contract does not exist. The source of power stems from a supernatural sphere, and is therefore not subject to moral evaluation. As Anderson bluntly says: ‘Power is neither legitimate nor illegitimate. *Power is*’ (1972: 8; emphasis added). The political implications of this are, of course, far from trivial.

The model has proved to be a powerful tool for the analysis of political structures in the region, yet it is far from unproblematic. Criticism inspired by both Marxist perspectives and postmodern approaches agree in pointing out that the model presents a totalizing view of power, that it is unable to capture the inherently contested nature of power narratives, and overlooks alternative notions of power that may exist. In short, the approach remains content with presenting the hegemonic ideological narrative of power (Howe, 1991; Parbottingi, 1995; Reynolds, 1995; Tooker, 1996). In a scathing review of Errington’s work from Sulawesi (1989), Caldwell (1991) claims she has simply bought the elite’s self-representation, without attempting to confront it with other understandings. This line of criticism, that there exist alternative ideas about power, might not only seem to be of minor importance but also easily accommodated within the model’s framework without substantially altering it. This, however, is not quite true. Anderson’s central idea that power does not raise the moral issue of legitimacy is subject to challenge because the very existence of competing notions of power in and of itself raises such questions.

This article attempts to throw some light on these issues, although approaching them from a different angle. The empirical basis of the discussion consists in beliefs in the magical protection of amulets, as they are found on the Philippine island of Bohol. Many aspects of these beliefs are compatible with Anderson’s idea of power, and his model serves to explain important features. In particular, the requirements of ascetic practices for accumulating and retaining the supernatural powers become understandable in the light of the Javanese model. However, the article also addresses the local elaborations on this Southeast Asian theme. A particularity of the Philippine case is the way that the ascetic practices are talked about and understood through the use of a cultural idiom based on a notion of ‘sacrifice’, explicitly linked to Christian imagery and in particular to the

sacrifice of Christ. This concept of sacrifice constitutes an important cultural model with strong moral overtones, which is used also in other contexts than those related to supernatural power. The moral aspect to the idiom in which asceticism is understood has several implications. In particular, it means that the question of the legitimacy of power becomes more complex. Thus, the analysis concludes, at least in the Philippine context, there is a need for a more complex understanding of power than Anderson's model allows. Specifically, while supernatural power and political power are clearly related, they should not be conflated. It is by distinguishing between these forms that the issue of legitimacy can be sorted out.

The article opens with a presentation of two cases of men of supernatural powers from the farming community of Bohol where I did fieldwork. This description is complemented by material from other parts of the Philippines, in order to show that the underlying understandings are common throughout a wide area. These understandings are then analyzed in light of Anderson's model—an analysis that brings out the centrality of the concept of sacrifice. The final section focuses on the issue of legitimacy, and includes additional empirical material in order to argue that this issue is less straightforward than it appears from Anderson's discussion.

Supernatural Power in Ginopolan

The ethnographic material is from the farming community of Ginopolan.¹ This is a *barangay*² within the municipality of Valencia, located on the southern coast of Bohol, some 40 km from the provincial capital, Tagbilaran City. Bohol is a Cebuano-speaking island, located in the central Visayas. As in many Philippine towns, there is a big difference between the town centre—*población*—with its church, municipal building, market, hospitals, and various stores, and the surrounding *bukid* ('mountain'),³ where nine-tenths of the population live—mainly small farmers, tenants, farm laborers, and fishermen. Ginopolan is located in the hills, 7 km from the town, and has a population of about 670. All households are engaged in agriculture, with lowland rice and coconuts being the most important crops. Remittances from family members working in cities (especially Manila), on ships, or abroad are also of great economic importance.

Santos

*Nong Santos*⁴ is the grand old man of the *barangay*. He is a tall man, and although at the age of 81 his movements are somewhat slow, he has retained his boyish charm. He is gentle and mild-mannered, with a serene smile, and he can seem almost self-effacing in his effort to avoid appearing prideful. Nevertheless, there is no mistaking the underlying authority he possesses, nor the respect he is universally shown.

Santos is renowned as a *meriko*, or faith healer. His specialty is curing 'the diseases the doctors cannot heal'—diseases with a supernatural cause. Such causes include spirits who for some reason want to harm a human being, or the acts of an evil sorcerer. In his curing, Santos will combine herbal medicines with *orasyones*—secret Latin prayers of great power. Santos's talents are not limited to curing, but can be used for any kind of encounter with the supernatural. For example, when the road to Ginopolan was to be opened, the bulldozers were incapable of moving a medium-sized stone, located near an area known to be the home of the *engkanto*, a kind of nature spirit. Santos was called. He placed a lighted candle on the stone and prayed there. That forced the *engkanto* living in that stone to move, and afterwards there was no difficulty in shifting the stone.

Santos's reputation is such that even the priests of the neighboring town of García-Hernández called on him when their pigs were restless all night. Santos discovered that the reason was that the pigsty had been built over the path of the *engkanto*. After he prayed there, and buried a piece of paper with a Latin prayer written on it, the animals were no longer disturbed at night. To avoid this kind of problem, most people will consult with Santos (or another knowledgeable person) for advice about a suitable location when building a house. Santos will also often bless the house before the owners move in. In the case of theft, Santos has the ability, through intensive prayers, to make the thief so uneasy that he will return what is stolen. (However, for this particular service, Santos's reputation does not match that of another *meriko* living in the neighboring *barangay*.)

Santos's powers extend to handling physical confrontations. There are many versions of the story about the time when Santos was set upon by a gang of thieves in Cebu City. There were seven of them, armed with long knives and intent on killing him, but he defeated them all. The versions differ a bit as to how Santos managed that—whether through making himself invisible, or by being invulnerable to the weapons, or simply by disarming them all by moving so incredibly fast they had no chance to react. According to some, Santos is able to fly, or to transport himself at will to any place.

The source of these powers is partly his possession of a *librito*, the small magical book of Latin prayers,⁵ which he received under mystical circumstances. As he himself related the story, he had been searching for such a talisman for a long time, even journeying to the neighboring island of Camiguin in search of one. There an old man showed him his prayer book of *orasyones*, but the letters in that book had unfortunately become illegible. Luckily, however, Santos's younger brother was getting married on another nearby island, Siquijor.⁶ When Santos went to attend the wedding, he was given a small book by an old woman there—according to one account, this happened on Good Friday. Santos discovered that this was the

same book he had been shown in Camiguin, but now the writing could be read easily.⁷

Although this *librito* has given him great powers, Santos stresses that it will not serve everyone. It will not work unless one is very serious, praying all the time, day and night. If a person tries, but does not manage to master the potency, he might become insane. Plenty of people have come and asked to be taught, Santos told me, but none have managed to achieve what he has done. When he asks them if they 'can do this and this, pray so many times at day and at night, they do not dare, maybe because it will take all of their time'. Santos himself became thin from lack of sleep and eating. These sacrifices in the form of praying, fasting and forgoing sleep were not just something practiced when he received the book—Santos still continues to practice them. This is why he is still thin, he says. Other people also comment on the dedication he shows in praying. Every Friday he will spend the entire day praying, and he will sit for a whole hour with his arms outstretched, praying in front of an image of Jesus on the Cross.

When asked why he had been so eager to find this *librito* and to obtain healing powers, Santos was quite explicit: 'I want to do for my fellow man what God did for his disciples and for all humans—to sacrifice for the sake of my fellow men, like God sacrificed and even was killed for us.' Santos never asks for payment for his services. If people give him, he will accept, he says, but will use the money for lighting candles in the chapel. 'Taking payment would be like making business out of the gifts from God. Love thy neighbor is God's commandment', he explains.

Of course, it could be pointed out that most of what Santos receives is probably in kind and not in cash, and therefore not liable to be converted into candles. Nevertheless, what Santos receives from his curing practice must be negligible as a source of revenue. He already has a fair income as one of the largest landowners of Ginopolan, and he also receives remittances from those of his 14 children who are working in Manila. But while the material rewards may be small from the use of his powers for curing and protection, the immaterial rewards in the form of respect and prestige are considerable and, one would assume, important to Santos. One expression of this respect is Santos's political career. He started as 'police lieutenant *sa barrio*',⁸ and became *teniente del barrio*⁹ a year after. He served as *teniente del barrio* for two periods (eight years), thereafter he was president of the PTA, the Parent-Teacher Association. He withdrew from this post in order to run for the municipal council, where he served two terms as councilman and one as vice-mayor.

In the Philippines, it is rare for a relatively uneducated peasant from the *bukid* to be elected to municipal positions. Such positions, and particularly the post of vice-mayor, will normally be reserved for members of the educated urban upper class. But Santos's reputation extends to all the 35 *barangays* of the town of Valencia. Moreover, as he will proudly mention,

during the *fiesta*, his house is visited both by priests from other towns and by politicians at the provincial level.¹⁰ Within the Church, Santos holds a special, albeit non-formal, position of respect, and will be consulted regarding all arrangements concerning the *barangay* chapel. On special occasions, such as when the image of the *birhen sa barangay*¹¹ comes to Ginopolan during the annual tour of the Valencia *barangays*, he will participate in the planning. After services in the chapel, Santos is invariably among the select few to be served food and drinks in the back room, together with the priest. And the latter will always give Santos a lift to and from mass, and normally stop at his house for a small glass on the way back.

Thus, Santos is a man who is exceptionally respected, both for his powers and for his devotion and the sacrifices he makes. In a sense, these two aspects—the potency and the sacrifices—are inseparable, two sides to the same coin.

Bayardo

Although Santos's status as the grand old man of Ginopolan is undisputed, it is not a foregone conclusion that he is the best-known person of the *barangay*. In this respect, he has a rival in Bayardo, who won fame as the fearless leader of a vigilante group. Unfortunately, Bayardo has since moved to the neighboring municipality, and I had the chance to visit him only once. But there are many stories about him, and the following description is based mainly on those.

Bayardo today is in his early forties, a short stocky man who does not seem to be a man of power at first glance. Indeed, I was a bit disappointed when I finally met this fabled person—who turned out to be the only rural Boholanon I ever saw who wore a helmet when riding his motorbike, and who did not drink rum because it upset his stomach. This was not quite what I had expected of a man known for his bravery and invulnerability to bullets. But of course, my reaction probably said more about my own particular stereotypes of warrior heroes. On closer observation, Bayardo's quiet manner also showed confidence and capability, and the respect and deference he was shown by my companions from Ginopolan were impossible to mistake.

Bayardo grew up in Ginopolan, in a household with relatively little land. In the late 1970s he spent some years in Mindanao, working at different places as agricultural laborer in the countryside, and doing various odd jobs in the city of Cagayan de Oro. It was here he met and married his first wife, Nora. At some point, he returned to Bohol, and in the early 1980s he became a member of the New People's Army (NPA, the communist guerrilla army). Apparently, he spent four years as a guerrilla soldier in the interior of the island. Then he deserted, and subsequently formed his own vigilante group and started fighting against the NPA. Although he was

living in Ginopolan, he and his group would be on the move much of the time, chasing 'the rebels'. There were fights and shoot-outs in the mountains of the interior and it is from these exploits that Bayardo's fame stems. Bayardo was known to possess an *anting-anting* or amulet which made him invulnerable, and the Ginopolans all agree that the reason why the *barangay* experienced an almost total end to the guerrilla presence around 1988/9 was because the NPA was scared of him.

There had never been a continuous guerrilla presence in Ginopolan, but in the mid-1980s it became quite common for the peasant households to receive visits from small guerrilla units. They would hold 'political education', collect 'revolutionary taxes', and initiate 'projects' among the farmers. Such projects were mostly small, communally cultivated plots where the produce was supposed to go to the NPA. There was never any fighting in Ginopolan, nor were any Ginopolans killed. However, the NPA did liquidate several people in the neighboring *barangays*, also those closer to town. The people who were killed were drunkards, who were known to be troublemakers of whom many people were scared, and the NPA had condemned them to death for this reason. The attitudes of the farmers to the NPA were ambivalent, but it seems beyond dispute that fear was the main reason why they gave the guerrillas food.

The army was known to move slowly in the terrain, and the NPA reportedly did not consider it much of a threat. But the local villagers feared the army, as it was known that people had been killed on suspicion of being associated with the rebels. Part of the reason why Bayardo achieved his hero status was the fact that he also managed to curb such repressive measures from the military in the area. He was thus seen as protecting the local people from both the warring parties. Around the armed core of the vigilante group, Bayardo organized a mass movement to give support to the fighters. This mass organization encompassed a considerable part of Bohol, and also arranged large rallies to protest against the actions of the NPA.

After the fighting ebbed out, Bayardo settled in the neighboring municipality, Sierra Bullones, where he now lives with his new (common-law) wife. There he has had a rapid political career—starting as member of the *barangay* council, going on to become *barangay* captain, and then president of the Association of Barangay Captains, in which capacity he is a member of the municipal council as well. When people speak of Bayardo, the esteem in which he is held is indicated by references to Jesus Christ and to Philippine national heroes: I have heard him spoken of as 'the Savior of Bohol', and as being just as brave as 'Sikatuna, Tamblot and Dagohoy'—three of the very few Boholanons to make it into the Philippine history books. The stories emphasize the hardships he endured as a fighter—the long, hard treks through the bush (where fit and younger soldiers could not keep up with him); the shortage of sleep and food over long periods of living in the forests; how his activities made him a prime NPA target and he was forced

to live in a cave for long periods.¹² These hardships were spoken of as sacrifices made by Bayardo in order to defend his native community and all of Bohol.

There are different stories about Bayardo's *anting-anting*. The one I am reproducing here is the most detailed account. According to this story, the amulet was in the form of a crucifix, with the particularity that Jesus was facing the cross. Bayardo's wife found this crucifix floating in the stream when she went to collect water one morning. She took it home and placed it on the house altar. Bayardo was with the NPA at that time. However, one morning when he woke up, the crucifix had been mysteriously transported from the altar, and he found it lying on its face. That was the day Bayardo decided to leave the guerrillas. He surrendered to the military and was taken to the provincial army headquarters. But knowing the army had been infiltrated by the NPA and fearing for his life, he escaped by climbing the barbed wire fence of the camp. He went to Carmen, where there is a famous image of the Virgin of Fatima, and spent a long time there in prayer. As he was leaving, a group of NPA members were approaching, but he saw them, ran back to the shrine, and escaped through the bushes. During the time he was praying to the Virgin, he also received an *orasyon*, a magical prayer, which gave him additional protection and which forms part of his *anting-anting*.¹³

During the time of my fieldwork, it was often rumored that the NPA were reorganizing and would be returning to the area shortly. Naturally, this was a prospect that worried many people. I was told that what made it even more dangerous now was that Bayardo could no longer protect the *barangay*. The reason for this was not that he had moved to another municipality, as it is not that far away, and there was no doubt that Bayardo would do what he could for his native *barangay* in a time of need. Rather, the problem was that Bayardo had left his first wife, and was now living with another woman. Because of that act of infidelity, he was no longer protected by his *anting-anting*.

Supernatural Power and Asceticism in the Philippines

The stories of Santos and Bayardo are by no means exceptional. During the Second World War occupation of Bohol, for instance, the most active and charismatic guerrilla leader was Vicente T. Cubero, better known as Captain Francisco Salazar.¹⁴ He led several ambushes against the Japanese until he was killed in action in October 1942. According to his biographer Rizalino Israel, Francisco Salazar 'was a warrior in the true sense of the word for ... [he] believed that one's life must be sacrificed for God and country if man's soul is to be saved from eternal damnation' (Israel, 1970: 5). Accounts of his exploits invariably mention his *anting-anting*.

Apparently, this amulet was in the form of a *librito*—a small, black book containing magical Latin prayers. By uttering these prayers, or *orasyones*, Salazar became invulnerable to bullets and other weapons, and able to transform his features and to ‘reduce himself into a size which enabled him to enter a small bottle’ (Israel, 1970: 17). His invulnerability was also seen as related to his practices of fasting, forgoing sleep, long hours of praying and abstention from contact with women (or anything female, such as eating a female chicken) before battle. Descriptions of his character emphasize his modesty and humbleness, his honesty and strict morality, his patriotism and his religious devotion. He would lecture his men on virtuous living and counsel them to always pray to God. There are many testimonies to his invulnerability, such as the following from the memoirs of one of his junior officers:

From what I saw, believe it or not, the Captain was bullet-proof. Volumes of fire were directed at him; machine-gun bullets rained on him; hand-grenades exploded right on the spot where he was standing; yet, to my surprise he did not even suffer a single scratch! (Quoted in Ferandos, 1981: 37)

After such encounters, Salazar’s body would show only blueish spots that indicated the bullet marks. In one description of his surviving a hand-grenade explosion without harm, he first made the sign of the cross, then spread his arms perpendicularly—as if he were being crucified himself.

Salazar is reported to have been very popular and much loved by his men. According to one source, it was due to Salazar’s possession of the *anting-anting* that ‘so many able-bodied men joined his unit’ (Putong, 1965: 52). There were reportedly 700 guerrillas taking part in Captain Salazar’s final operation—an ambush on a Japanese troop convoy in Ubujan, outside of Tagbilaran city. Only a handful of the fighters had firearms, the main force being armed solely with long knives. But confident in the supernatural protection of their leader, and having been told that they would die unless they obeyed his commands, the men fearlessly attacked the better-armed Japanese. With the advantage of surprise, and the confusion created among the Japanese by a dynamite bomb exploding under one of the trucks, the Philippine fighters managed to kill 89 Japanese soldiers, if we are to believe their body count. Among the guerrillas, 14 men were killed—one of them Francisco Salazar himself.

Ramos provides the following explanation for the demise of the guerrilla leader:

It has been said by old-folks-knowers that only a female could neutralize the power of a talisman. It had been coincidentally proven true in the case of Francisco Salazar, for before the firing line or the battle line, a woman crossed the path, in the person of a certain Maria, who together with a lad pretended to be looking for a medicine man to cure her ailment but in reality was a Japanese spy. (Ramos, 1989: 12)

Stories like this abound in the Philippines. The resort to magical means of protection has been a common theme of guerrilla warfare and popular

uprisings in Philippine history ever since the early Spanish period. *Anting-anting* of various forms were supposed to render their bearers invulnerable to bullets and swords, and they were widely used by both leaders and followers. With reference to the Second World War, Arens states: 'it is said that no guerilla leader could gain followers if he was not known to have a powerful Anting-anting' (1957: 115). So common were these amulets during the Philippine revolution and the subsequent war against the Americans that the veterans came to be known as simply 'men of *anting-anting*'. Belief in the protection of these amulets was so strong that, in Iletto's words, the participants in popular uprisings were described as 'having fought with a seeming disregard for death, thus resulting in appalling casualties on their side' (1989: 33).

On the island of Bohol, we can find examples from four centuries. In one of the early Philippine uprisings against the Spaniards, the Tamblot revolt of 1622, the leader Tamblot promised his followers that the 'mountains would rise against the foe, that the muskets of the latter would not go off, or rebound on those who fired them, that if any Indian [i.e. Filipino] should die, the [gods] would resuscitate him' (from Velarde's *Historia de Philipinas*, quoted in Sturtevant, 1976: 80 n.). Belief in their invulnerability was to cause massive losses among Tamblot's 2000 followers when they faced the better-armed Spanish forces (Luengo, 1991: 118–20). More than a hundred years later, during the Dagohoy rebellion on Bohol, which lasted for 85 years, the 20,000 rebels showed a similar contempt for death in battle. According to one source, Dagohoy himself possessed several *anting-anting*, which protected him from harm from his enemies, and enabled him to move from one hilltop to another or to disappear and reappear at will, and to see in the dark (Nuñez Misa, 1970: 65–6, 94). Villagers on Bohol today still speak of Dagohoy as a man of *anting-anting*. In March 1901, every one of the 406 Boholano soldiers armed with knives and spears was killed when attempting to ambush a contingent of the US occupying forces at Jagna. The Americans apparently suffered no fatalities in the encounter (Tirol, 1975: 215). Although the resistance on Bohol against the US forces was formally ended by December 1901, disturbances continued in the form of bands of *pulahanes*. This movement, originating from Samar and Leyte, consisted of peasant religious rebels with *anting-anting*, wearing red uniforms emblazoned with white crosses, and 'fighting with the ferocity of men convinced of their own invulnerability' (Sturtevant, 1976: 129).

While detailed studies of these Boholano experiences are limited, there is a wide range of studies focusing on similar movements in other parts of the Philippine archipelago. Sturtevant (1976) and Iletto (1989) are classic monographs on popular uprisings in the 19th and 20th centuries, both documenting the pervasiveness of beliefs in the protection of amulets. Iletto's work, focused on uprisings in Central Luzon, is particularly interesting in the present context, as his aim is to analyze the system of ideas

and moral beliefs that underlies and gives force to these movements. Given 'the fact that these amulets or special powers played a significant role in the thinking and motivation of peasant rebels, bandits, soldiers and even generals of the revolutionary army', Ileto finds it necessary to provide an extended discussion of them (Ileto, 1989: 22–7). Aguilar's study of hegemony on the Western Visayan island of Negros similarly shows how ideas about power and *anting-anting* were central for the image as 'men of prowess' that sugar barons and local strongmen of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were able to project (Aguilar, 1998). For the same area, Hart (1967), McCoy (1982), and Cullamar (1986) have documented the importance of magical amulets in various religiously inspired peasant uprisings of the period. For the Eastern Visayas, Arens (1957, 1959) describes the use of amulets in the Pulahan movement of the early 20th century and among Second World War guerrillas.

Nor are these beliefs in *anting-anting* dead, found only in accounts of bygone times. In 1967, for instance, the Lapiang Malaya movement climaxed with mass killings when its members, without firearms, tried to fight the police on Taft Avenue in central Manila (Ileto, 1989: 1–2; Sturtevant, 1976: 256–60). Moreover, McCoy recounts how the official Marcos campaign biography described the president as having an *anting-anting* in the form of a sliver of petrified stone in his back. This charm had supposedly been bequeathed Marcos by the founder of the Philippine church, Gregorio Aglipay, and had the capacity to make its holder able to disappear and reappear at will, restore the dead to life, as well as to provide supernatural protection to Marcos and his soldiers during his alleged military exploits against the Japanese in the Second World War (McCoy, 1982: 141). *Anting-anting* have been central to many of the vigilante groups which have emerged since the 1970s (May, 1992). A news story from 1998 tells of a farmer in San Pablo City who shot his drinking companion twice with a .45 caliber pistol in order to test the latter's amulet. Unfortunately, the amulet failed, and the owner died (Philippines Headline News Online, phno@newsflash.org, 27 July 1998). Other accounts of recent beliefs in the potency of *anting-anting* are presented in Shoesmith (1978: 154), Gorospe (1992: 215–17), Vitug (1995: 48) and Meñez (1996: 95–101). And as the cases presented above testify, such ideas were strong and pervasive among small farmers of southern Bohol during my own fieldwork between 1995 and 1998.

Anting-anting come in a wide variety of forms, not solely for protection against bullets or physical violence. They are also held to be efficient against the spells of spirits, witches, or sorcerers, to cure a wide range of illnesses, protect crops and animals, or make their owners invisible or able to fly or to change appearance at will. Although often consisting of *libritos*, church regalia, or other objects empowered through the association with church rituals, the *anting-anting* can take virtually any form—Ileto gives examples such as the bodily fluids of an unbaptized child, parts of plants or animals

of unusual proportions, special human beings, or the knowledge of a magical prayer.

From a careful reading of the more detailed of these sources, it appears that, while the amulets are seen as powerful in themselves, there are still requirements placed on the bearer in order to harness this power. Practices of self-denial and asceticism are necessary to access and control the potency of the *anting-anting*. Thus, Ileto writes:

For the power that is concentrated in an amulet to be absorbed by its wearer, the latter's *loób* [Tagalog word referring to a person's inner self] must be properly cultivated through ascetic practices, prayer, controlled body movements and other forms of self-discipline. For an amulet to take effect, the *loób* of its possessor must have undergone a renewal and purification. (Ileto, 1989: 25)

The forms of these practices of self-denial vary. Ileto reproduces part of one list of such restrictions that the bearer must observe:

He must not taste vinegar nor eat any kind of sour or salty food; he must not be coward; he must face if possible any danger . . . he must not feel proud that he has this cabalistic quality; he must not tell a lie; he must not make use of his human affection and worldly desire for at least one year . . . [he must] pray every evening before retiring, usually the Our Father, at least three times. (Ileto, 1989: 25)

In battle, additional elaborate rituals are apparently required. In Ileto's analysis of religiously inspired popular movements of Central Luzon, one recurrent form of ascetic practice is the *lakaran*—literally 'journey on foot'—which refers to long treks, involving dangers and hardships, often with the ascent of a sacred mountain as the objective. Such journeys, with the characteristics of pilgrimages, were often undertaken as part of the ceremonies initiating novices into these political-religious movements. Ileto shows how these walks and climbs were understood by the participants as experiences of trials and sufferings to be borne with the serenity that comes from control of the self. The supreme example of and model for these *lakaran* was Christ's progression to Calvary (Ileto, 1989: 56).

The explicit concern with the purification of one's *loób* or inner self may be typical mainly of the Tagalog-speaking areas of Central Luzon, where Ileto has gathered his material, but the importance of ascetic practices in connection with protective amulets is mentioned in studies from all over the Philippines. Thus, Aguilar writes of scaling a Negros sacred mountain as a way of attaining *anting-anting* power (1998: 174, 184). Shoesmith describes strict discipline—including abstention from drinking, smoking, dancing, cursing, gambling and watching movies—and participation in the agony of Christ on the Cross through lengthy prayers and rituals involving self-mutilation, among the amulet-bearing followers of a Rizalian sect on Mindanao (1978: 163, 166). Arens, who analyzed a host of different amulets from Samar and Leyte, concluded that their efficacy was normally dependent on the observance of certain rituals and secrecy (1957: 125).

Javanese Power and Philippine Parallels

Several of these studies interpret *anting-anting* beliefs in a regional context, as part of a set of ideas common to Southeast Asia as a whole (Ileto, 1989; McCoy, 1982; Meñez, 1996). There is certainly considerable empirical justification for this perspective. In *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, for instance, there is a chapter by Ileto entitled 'Religion and Anti-Colonial Movements'. In it he uses the similarities in beliefs in 'men of power' throughout the region, and their role in anti-colonial movements of the past two centuries, as the basis for the construction of a regional historical narrative. Magical amulets and ascetic practices are key themes in these beliefs (Ileto, 1992). On the other hand, such broad and sweeping comparisons are by no means unproblematic. While they may facilitate the identification of certain fundamental ideas common to the larger area, they may also obscure local differences in how these ideas are applied, and in how they are integrated into a wider cultural matrix. Here I aim to steer a middle course, by using material from the wider Southeast Asian context in order to draw out central elements of *anting-anting* beliefs, while at the same time attempting to delineate ways in which the Philippine material diverges from what has been described from other countries in the region.¹⁵

In relating the Philippine ideas about *anting-anting* to the regional context, both Ileto and Meñez draw on Benedict Anderson's 'Idea of Power in Javanese Culture' (Anderson, 1972). Anderson sees the Javanese concept of power as radically different from the western social science or common-sense view of power as some abstract aspect of social relationships. According to Anderson, power in the Javanese tradition is a concrete entity which exists 'independently of its possible users . . . Power is that intangible, mysterious and divine energy which animates the universe . . . [and] is manifested in every aspect of the natural world, in stones, trees, clouds, and fire' (1972: 7). This 'mystical power' can be accumulated or concentrated by individuals. Anderson mentions three main ways of acquiring it: perhaps most fundamentally through *personal asceticism*, through '*certain rituals*, often containing a core of asceticism, such as fasting, meditation, and so forth, and by the *possession of certain objects or persons* regarded as being "filled" with Power' (1972: 10; emphasis mine).

When asceticism is described as the most fundamental way of acquiring potency, this is because the 'purification' of one's inner self, obtained through various ascetic practices, is a precondition for obtaining potency by any means. While the rituals or magic possessions may confer potency on a person who has already 'purified' himself and purged his desires through some form of self-denial, they will do nothing for a person who is still in the grip of his own passions. Anderson mentions fasting, going without sleep, meditation, sexual abstinence, ritual purification and various types of sacrifices as examples of different forms of asceticism (1972: 8), underscoring

that the basic idea is to concentrate or focus in oneself the 'the divine energy suffusing the universe'. As for the role of powerful objects or persons, Anderson writes:

... it was an old tradition in Java that the ruler should concentrate around him any objects or persons held to have or contain unusual Power. His palace would be filled not only with the traditional array of *pusaka* (heirlooms), such as krisses, spears, sacred musical instruments, carriages, and the like, but also various types of extraordinary human beings, such as albinos, clowns, dwarves and fortunetellers. Being in the palace with the ruler, their Power was absorbed by, and further added to, his own. (1972: 12)

The basic idea about accumulation, retention, and dispersal of potency is brought out in Anderson's characterization of the typical plots of traditional Javanese literature:

The essential difference between the heroes and their adversaries [i.e. demons and giants], however, is that the latter eventually permit their Power to be diffused by indulging their passions without restraint, whereas the former maintain that steadfastness, that tense singleness of purpose which assures the maintenance and continued accumulation of Power. (p. 10)

This is typically dramatized in the traditional *wajang* plays, where the hero stands perfectly still ... while his demonic adversary repeatedly strikes at him with dagger, club or sword—but to no avail. The concentrated Power of the *satria* [knight] makes him invulnerable ... The single most imminent threat to this invulnerability is not the *satria's* adversary, but *pamrih*. *Pamrih* is a complex term perhaps best translated as 'concealed personal motive'. It means doing something, not because the act has to be done, but because one's personal interests or desires are thereby satisfied ... [T]he indulgence of personal passions or prejudices means interior imbalance and a diffusion of personal concentration and Power. (p. 39)

This description of how supernatural power and invulnerability are linked to asceticism, ritual practices, and empowered objects fits very well with the Philippine material. A good case can be made for considering this set of beliefs to be common throughout insular Southeast Asia, as Errington suggests (1989, 1990). On the other hand, these beliefs are elaborated differently in different contexts. As Ileto says: 'These ideas are common to Javanese and Tagalogs. But historical circumstances have given a unique shape to Filipino beliefs and practices' (1989: 25). Particular to the Philippines is the way in which these ideas have become integrated with Christian imagery. Ileto shows how popular texts of the story of the life of Jesus Christ served as an idiom for understanding issues of power and of rebellion in Central Luzon in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The empirical material from Bohol allows us to examine another aspect of the integration of Christian beliefs and ideas of power, namely the way in which ascetic practices are understood in terms of the notion of *sacrifice*.

The Idea of Sacrifice in the Philippines

The cases of Santos and Bayardo, as well as the story of Francisco Salazar, show a great consistency with Anderson's material from Java. Central to all the descriptions is the theme of asceticism, suffering, and selflessness as an absolute condition for potency. Francisco Salazar has been described as a person who sincerely believed that a man's life should be sacrificed for God and country, and who lived up to this conviction. Moreover, his supernatural powers are explained as partly due to practices of fasting, praying, forgoing sleep, and sexual abstinence. Similarly, Santos emphasizes his praying, fasting, and forgoing sleep when explaining his powers, as do the other villagers who talk about him. These trials are all referred to as sacrifices. Moreover, his motivation for becoming a faith healer is couched in these terms: he wanted to sacrifice for his fellow men as Christ sacrificed his life for us. And again, in the stories of Bayardo, the hardships and dangers he undergoes for the sake of his native village are emphasized, and spoken of as sacrifices.

As is apparent from this material, an important way of speaking and thinking about these ascetic practices required for obtaining supernatural power is in the idiom of 'sacrifice'. I believe this notion of 'sacrifice' to be a central idea throughout much of the Philippines.¹⁶ In these contexts, 'sacrifice' (*sakripisyo*, *sacrificio*) has a more specific and restricted usage than in Standard English. Briefly put, the idea is that by undergoing some form of hardship, one will be able to help somebody else. The underlying idea is one of exchange: by doing something for God (or for a saint)—praising, honouring or suffering for him somehow—it is expected that he will do a service in return.¹⁷ In perhaps its clearest form, the idea is brought out in the ritual practices of flagellation and self-crucifixion during Easter celebrations in Central Luzon. The common reason for undertaking these painful experiences is to fulfill a vow given under difficult circumstances, typically a family member's illness, or dire economic straits. This form of sacrifice differs markedly from European forms of self-punishment, which have been more oriented towards penance for sins committed, or towards the mortification of the flesh for the sake of the eternal soul. The Philippine idea of sacrifice, in contrast, aims for worldly and material direct rewards—although unselfish ones (Barker, 1998; Rugkåsa, 1997; Zialcita, 1986).

An important aspect to this notion of sacrifice is the way it is modeled on the supreme example of Jesus Christ. His dying on the cross for the sake of humanity is the prototypical example of sacrifice, to which explicit and implicit references are constantly made. Thus, Santos explicitly compares his mission to Jesus Christ's, and also imitates Christ on the Cross when praying for long periods with his arms extended. Salazar assumed the same position under grenade attacks, and his preaching of duty, religion, and self-restraint to his soldiers was directly compared to the teachings of Christ to

his disciples (Ferandos, 1981: 68). Bayardo is spoken of as 'the Saviour of Bohol'. The importance of Good Friday as the day for obtaining and empowering *anting-anting*¹⁸ similarly points to an identification of the power of amulets with that of Christ. Such themes of identification with and imitation of Jesus Christ are well documented from all over the Philippines. Cannell's analysis of healers in Bicol takes their practices of imitating Christ as the point of departure (Cannell, 1995); Iletto claims the power-seeking pilgrimages central to the popular movements he studied to be modeled on Christ's ascent to Calvary (Iletto, 1989); in another work he argues that the immense popularity of the Philippine national hero José Rizal is due to the way that his life could be interpreted as a re-enactment of the life of Jesus Christ (Iletto, 1982); and Shoesmith explains self-mutilation practices among Mindanao sect members as a way of participating in the agony of Christ (1978: 166). The list could easily be extended. The cases of self-crucifixion and flagellation on Luzon are simply the most evident and best-known examples of this identification with and imitation of Jesus Christ.¹⁹

The notion of sacrifice is not only used with reference to ascetic practices in order to obtain supernatural power. It is a concept that is applicable in a wide variety of contexts. Commonly, for instance, when a child or other close family member is sick, or about to take a crucial exam, one might give a small sum to the priest so that he will pray for the person during mass, or promise to hold a procession to one's house with the image of the saint of the local chapel. These acts are referred to as 'sacrifices'. Similarly, extended praying, the carrying of saints during processions, playing musical instruments during ceremonies, going to mass, etc., are all thought of as sacrifices which can serve to help one's family in some way.

The term 'sacrifice' is also commonly used when people describe what they have done for others, or the performance of an action for some common good. Labor migrants, whose remittances have allowed younger siblings an education they themselves were never afforded, speak of this contribution as a sacrifice.²⁰ A poor farmer, struggling to feed his children, who therefore puts in more work on his plot than the neighbors, would likewise refer to this effort in terms of sacrifice. Similarly, the present *barangay* captain, as well as the three previous ones, always mentions the hard and often ungrateful work of the position, emphasizing that it is a service undertaken to help the people of the community, and usually explicitly referring to it as a 'sacrifice'. Several of the *barangay* councilmen also speak of their service in this way.²¹ Moreover, as noted above, Santos characterizes his work as a faith healer in terms of sacrificing for the sake of others. The same goes for how the other faith healers and other village health specialists—practitioners of herbal medicine (*mananambal*) or massage (*manghilot*), the traditional birth attendants (*mananabang*) and the *barangay* health workers—speak of their work.²² In several instances,

explicit comparisons were made to Christ's sacrifice—as Santos did in the example described.

A sacrifice necessarily implies doing something for *somebody else*. It is only against this background that it is possible to make a comparison with the example of Christ. One can of course make an offering to God (or a saint) in order to obtain some good *for oneself*. For instance, a student might make a vow to arrange a procession with the image of a saint to his house in order to pass a difficult exam, or a farmer could perform extended prayers to get a bountiful harvest. In such cases, however, the offering is *not* spoken of as a 'sacrifice'.

The importance given to doing things for others is also brought out in the way the medical experts avoid charging a fee. Most healers of the village will not specify a fee, but leave it open for the patient to pay what he or she feels like.²³ This goes both for those whose healing talents stem from supernatural powers (faith healers and to a lesser extent the massage experts, who are also considered to have a special gift) and for those who only use herbal remedies in their curing rituals. While in actual practice the amounts the healers receive for their service may not be very different from what they could have charged, there are other important implications to this way of presenting the transaction. By denying that this is a case of services bought and sold, the transaction is turned into a gift exchange. And as the healer gives the supreme gift of health, something which the patient cannot reciprocate, he will forever be indebted, and his return gifts can only be a token acknowledgement of this fact.²⁴ At the same time, the healer emphasizes that he is doing things for others. Thus, his services constitute a sacrifice.

The concern with whether something is done for others or for a personal motive is interesting also because it can be seen as a variation upon Anderson's theme of the importance of selflessness for maintaining power. As mentioned above, *pamrih*, or having a concealed personal motive, was held to lead to the dispersal of one's powers.²⁵ When 'sacrifice' in the Philippines is defined in terms of doing things for others, and this term is used in connection with the requirements for obtaining supernatural power, then two key elements from Anderson's analysis are brought together: *ascetic practices* and *selflessness*.

Anderson's argument that a lack of restraint or indulging in one's passions leads to the dispersion and loss of this potency seems also to be borne out by the material from Bohol. Let us take the case of another man of *anting-anting*, Uhing, a faith healer who died some 30 years ago. His powers stemmed from the possession of the skeleton of an *engkanto*. In addition to curing, however, he used his powers for seducing women. Apparently he gradually became insane, bragging he would kill 99 people before committing suicide. One evening, after he had come home drunk from celebrating the *fiesta* in a nearby *barangay*, the neighbors heard the

sounds of fighting from his house. Terrified, they thought Uhing had started the '99 killings' with his own family, and would continue the count with the neighbors, so they locked their doors and kept completely still. Then Uhing's 13-year-old son came home to find his father trying to kill his mother. The son managed to blind his father by throwing ashes in his eyes. Thereafter he beat him to death with an iron bar. This case can be read as an example of how potency and protection will leave the man of *anting-anting* when he loses all restraint and control. Similarly, we have seen that when Bayardo indulges his personal desires—abandoning his wife, setting up house with a new woman, starting a new life free of the hardships of vigilante life—it is assumed that this implies the loss of his magical protection. As he no longer evinces the steadfastness and tense singleness of purpose, Bayardo is no longer held to have supernatural powers, whether he still possesses his amulet or not.²⁶

A final point in connection with the use of the concept of 'sacrifice' for the codification of the ascetic practices required for attaining supernatural powers concerns the highly moral character of this concept. This moral character is related both to the characteristic of sacrifice as done for others and to the use of Jesus Christ as the prototypical example. Sacrifices are therefore invariably ascribed a high moral value. It is against this background that we should understand the efforts of healers and elected officials to present their work as sacrifice. Even though village morality is hard on boasting and on being prideful—having 'high pride' (*taas nga garbo*) is one of the most devastating critiques that can be leveled against somebody—the field of sacrifice is evidently one in which it is permissible to promote oneself. And as we can see by the high esteem in which Santos is held, and by the important positions he has achieved, there are also considerable personal rewards to be gained through selfless sacrifices for others.

Here we find a paradox, parallel to the one mentioned by Anderson, and that is that through practices of asceticism and selflessness one will actually *increase* one's power (1972: 9). Similarly, the selfless sacrifice for others also brings rewards in the form of prestige, respect, and access to positions of power. There is a Boholano saying which neatly sums this up: *Pagpaubos, pag-antos aron ka masantos*. Literally it translates as 'Be humble, and suffer, so that you will become saintly'. Putong, however, adds the following clarification: 'that is, so that you will prosper' (1965: 74). Clearly, then, Philippine sacrifices are for this-worldly purposes.

Power and Legitimacy

So far the discussion has shown the Philippine material to be consistent with Anderson's analysis from Java. This final section will deal with an important point where the two cases diverge. Anderson is quite emphatic that

power, in the Javanese sense, 'does not raise the question of legitimacy'. Whereas in a western tradition, power can be seen as used for good or for bad, and needs some kind of legitimization in order not to be challenged on moral grounds, this is a non-issue in the Javanese way of thinking: 'Power is neither legitimate nor illegitimate. Power is' (Anderson, 1972: 8). The Javanese attitude implies that potency is immune to moral judgements—in other words, might makes right.

Now, one might argue that the emphasis on asceticism, self-discipline, and the avoidance of giving in to one's passions are moral precepts. In a footnote Anderson acknowledges this. However, if I understand him correctly, he sees these practices not as virtues in their own right, but as instrumental means to obtaining power. 'In so far as a moral judgment is made,' he writes,

it is not about the use of Power, but about its retention or dispersal. Criticism of the demons [of traditional literature, who squander their Power through indulging their passions without restraint] is levelled at their inability or unwillingness to conserve the Power they have accumulated. (1972: 10, footnote 16)

If there is a morality here, it is linked to the accumulation of powers as the supreme goal, while being totally indifferent to how these powers are used.

Shelly Errington elaborates on this amorality of power. In her works on power in Southeast Asia (1989, 1990), she quotes extensively from Anderson's essay, and likewise asserts that while 'potency' 'exists; it is neither good nor bad'.²⁷ For those 'who have constructed their social world around this concept', the principle has a standing comparable to the laws of nature. As she says:

In a world that operates within the law of gravity, common sense, more than ethics, suggests that stepping off high buildings would be foolish. In the same way, in many parts of Southeast Asia, common sense suggests that it is foolhardy to treat an extremely potent place, human or otherwise, with disrespect. Living in accordance with the analogue of the law of gravity is both wise and virtuous in such a society. It is foolish to incur ill fortune by being disrespectful to potent people and spirits, but it is *also wrong, because it erodes the order of the world, and imperils human access to the potency that, when tapped, brings fertility, health, wealth, and peace.* (1989: 291; emphasis added)

Although these accounts of the relationship of morality to power/potency differ slightly, they both agree in locating potency as logically prior to, and therefore above, morality. Potency cannot be criticized, it must only be respected, they claim. However, if we return to Ginopolan, this description does not quite correspond to the ideas about morality and power I found there. Let us consider yet another local 'man of *anting-anting*'.

Pakoy is a much-feared man. He comes from one of the *barangays* close to the town center. Like Bayardo, he was with the NPA for several years, and like him, he has put his guerrilla skills to use after leaving the revolutionary movement. However, instead of becoming a defender of his home *barangay* and launching a vigilante movement, Pakoy has apparently

decided to even out the score with every person he has ever had disagreements with, and has embarked on a life as a serial killer. In the course of the year I spent in Valencia, he killed six persons. As he was not arrested, and never gave any explanations for the killings, the motives must remain unclear. But popular speculation supplied various motives: Pakoy and his victim had quarreled at a cockfight years before; another victim had owed him a small amount of money; yet another one was killed out of jealousy or to rob him of a small sum; while a fourth one apparently was a case of mistaken identity. A prison guard, whom Pakoy had been in contact with while in prison several years before, was also supposed to be on Pakoy's 'hit list'. One rumor said that the list contained 66 names, and that, upon completing it, Pakoy was going to kill himself as well. The speculations centered on revenge as Pakoy's primary motive, and as the grudges he held were relatively minor, in no way could his actions be justified according to local morality.

The municipal police were under considerable pressure to catch him. Apparently, the police chief was given reinforcements, together with a time limit and threats of transfer to some unattractive posting if the deadline was not kept. Yet outside of card games in the police office and barbecuing food outside it, there was little police activity to be observed. Rumor had it that Pakoy was living in one of the interior *barangays* of Valencia, where he had relatives, but there was no attempt to mount a house-to-house search there. One night, when the police received a tip that Pakoy was sleeping on a bench by the roadside in the interior, they went looking for him by car. That road would usually see the bus pass maybe 10 times in the daytime, and occasionally a car or a truck would come, but at night, motorized traffic was virtually unheard of. Thus, the police could be assured that anyone sleeping there would be forewarned of their arrival.

Obviously, the police were scared, and with good reason. They were being told to apprehend a cold-blooded murderer—a man who probably enjoyed killing, and who had guerrilla training. Moreover, it was common knowledge that Pakoy had an *anting-anting*. I never found out what form his talisman took, but it was said to enable him to change his appearance at will. At one moment he might appear as an old man and then transform himself into a young woman. Thus, he could come and go anywhere without being recognized. Several times he was supposed to have come into the *población* dressed as a woman. So it was perhaps not so strange that the police approached their task with extreme caution. Similarly, it was hardly surprising that the villagers were lamenting that Bayardo was no longer there to protect them.

The case of Pakoy is different from the others I have mentioned, in that his powers are used exclusively for evil purposes. This evilness does not in any way seem to be an obstacle to popular perceptions of him as a man of *anting-anting*, a man of potency. Thus, one aspect of the amorality of

potency as described by Anderson and Errington is confirmed also in the case of Bohol—namely that it can very well be used for immoral purposes, without the morality or immorality of its application in any way affecting the strength of the supernatural power. As Anderson points out, the emphasis on asceticism and selflessness is thus more a practical requirement for attaining potency than a moral injunction. In the case of Pakoy, his dedication to his task of revenge, and the consequent hardships he undergoes as a wanted man, can be seen as indicating that he has ‘that tense single-ness of purpose which assures the maintenance and continued accumulation of Power’ (Anderson, 1972: 10).

Thus, potency is not dependent on morality for its existence—but this is not to say that it is not subject to moral critique. And here the Philippine case diverges from that which Anderson describes for Java, and which Errington claims is common to insular Southeast Asia. For although Pakoy is certainly feared for the powers he possesses, and prudence dictates that one should do the utmost not to get in his way, this is far from saying that people would consider him as a leader. On the contrary, rather than flocking to him, the natural reaction is to avoid him at all costs. He is seen as powerful, so that it would be extremely dangerous to be disrespectful to him, but there is absolutely no feeling that such disrespect would ‘erode the order of the world, and imperil human access to the potency that brings fertility, health, wealth and peace’ (Anderson, 1972: 10). On the contrary, it is Pakoy himself who is eroding the order of the world, and if anything could bring increased access to fertility, health, wealth, and peace, it would be by killing or otherwise stopping Pakoy.

In this case we see that Pakoy cannot translate his spiritual potency into any kind of leadership position. However, this should not be taken as meaning that there is *no* relation between spiritual potency and political leadership. Reviewing the other cases I have presented, it is apparent that, by having potency, people such as Francisco Salazar, Santos, and Bayardo are able to attract followers and gain political power. Concerning Salazar, it was explicitly said that it was due to his *anting-anting* that ‘so many able-bodied men joined his unit’ (Putong, 1965: 52). As for Santos, there is no doubt that it is his spiritual powers that are the reason for the high respect he is accorded, and for the political positions he has achieved. Similarly, that Bayardo could gather a following, first in the form of a vigilante group, and later in the form of voters, must be due to his perceived magical powers. Similar cases can be found throughout the Philippines. For instance, writing on political power and legitimization in the Philippines, Sidel also discusses men with *anting-anting* as one particular category of political leaders and notes that their legitimacy ‘rests to a considerable extent on beliefs in their intrinsic personal power, most commonly expressed through references to their martial prowess and possession of amulets or magical powers known as *anting-anting*’ (1995: 154). With reference to the Second World War,

Arens states: 'It is said that no guerilla leader could gain followers, if he was not known to have a powerful Anting-anting' (1957: 115). Such conversion of magical power to political power is well known throughout Southeast Asia. Errington writes: 'O.W. Wolters (1982) has suggested that tapping such [spiritual] powers and emerging as a leader with an entourage is a very ancient Southeast Asian form of politics and political structures' (1990: 42).

This seems precisely what these men of *anting-anting* are doing. But even though spiritual potency is convertible to political power, the case of Pakoy warns us that we should be careful not to conflate the two. Potency is not convertible to leadership positions in all cases. This is where morality enters, with the distinction between the morally acceptable use of spiritual potency, which can be translated into political power, and the morally unacceptable use of such potency, which cannot be used to build a political following. Pakoy's use of his potency cannot be morally defended, and he cannot build a following. Conversely, Francisco Salazar, Santos, and Bayardo have attained leadership positions not only because they have potency and do not misuse it, but also because their potency and the use of it are presented in a highly moral idiom, with emphasis on sacrifice and selflessness. The use of the notion of sacrifice, with its strong references to the example of Jesus Christ, focuses attention on the moral actions of the holder of power. While Pakoy may be sufficiently dedicated and willing to suffer hardships to obtain potency, these hardships cannot be interpreted in the idiom of sacrifice. Consequently, he cannot gain political legitimacy.

Thus, with reference to the Philippines we must keep the two forms of power distinct. Power, in the sense of 'that intangible, mysterious and divine energy which animates the universe', may well be described as an existential reality that is neither legitimate nor illegitimate—it just *is*. However, for that potency to be translated into political power, it becomes subject to moral evaluations. Political power needs to be legitimated. And in that respect it is distinct from spiritual potency.

Conclusion

We have seen how ascetic practices in the Philippines are understood to be a precondition for harnessing the supernatural powers of amulets. This has been analyzed as an instance of a set of beliefs common throughout much of Southeast Asia. The work of Benedict Anderson has been used in order to draw out some of the implications. I have also highlighted the way the Philippine material diverges from what has been described by Anderson. On the one hand, the use of Christian imagery—centered on the concept of sacrifice—has given a particular form to the Philippine practices of asceticism. And on the other hand, greater attention to the moral side of

the use of power means that supernatural power cannot translate directly into political power without the issue of legitimacy arising. These two particularities of the Philippine case may very well be related, as both imply an increased attention to the moral aspects of asceticism and power. We cannot say whether there is a causal relationship between the two—if the use of the morally laden concept of sacrifice has directed attention to the morality of the use of power; or conversely, if an original concern with the morality of the use of power has made the concept of sacrifice particularly appropriate as a metaphor for the ascetic practices necessary for obtaining potency. At any rate, the wider implications of the Philippine beliefs are very different from what has been described by Anderson (and Errington). I will not try to answer whether this is due to an empirical difference between the Philippines and other areas of Southeast Asia, or whether Anderson and Errington overstate their material. On the one hand, there are obvious historical differences between the Philippines and other Southeast Asian areas such as Java and Sulawesi, related for instance to the pre-colonial social structures, to colonial history, and to religion. On the other hand, Anderson's statement that power needs no legitimization has been greeted with considerable criticism from researchers also working in an Indonesian context (Caldwell, 1991; Howe, 1991; Parbottingi, 1995).

In conclusion, it is worth considering the general insights Anderson suggests might be drawn from his analysis. He ends his essay by proposing, 'very tentatively', that the Javanese concept of power may also serve as a basis for an elucidation of Weber's concept of charisma. Anderson suggests that, in defining charisma, attention should be focused on the culture of the followers of charismatic leaders rather than on the social, economic, or political conditions under which such leaders emerge or on their personalities. Thereby, the qualities of charisma can be reduced to

a belief on the part of the followers that their leader has Power. The *signs* of this Power—namely particular qualities—will be determined by the contingent, idiosyncratic character of particular cultures. One might suggest asceticism in Southeast Asia, and virility (*machismo*) in Latin America, as examples. Asceticism in the one cultural area, *machismo* in the other, signify the same thing—Power. (1972: 66)

This makes sense in a setting where power needs no legitimization—where spiritual potency invariably implies political power. But as the case of Pakoy shows, this is not the case everywhere. Although Pakoy is certainly seen as having potency, he embodies rather the antithesis of charisma in his evil and antisocial ways. Thus, charisma cannot simply be seen as equaling potency. A reformulation of Anderson's idea could be that charisma is the belief that a person has potency that he uses in socially acceptable ways. That means that potency must not be conflated with political power, as Anderson would have us do. But of course that also means that Anderson's elaboration on the Weberian concept of charisma loses some of its elegant simplicity.

NOTES

1. Fieldwork was conducted over two periods, from November 1995 to November 1996, and again from December 1997 to February 1998, with support from the Norwegian Research Council.
2. The *barangay* is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines.
3. Although normally glossed as 'mountain', the following entry on *bukidnon* (literally 'people living in the mountains') in Garcia's *Visayan-English Dictionary* captures the popular connotations fairly well: 'Less civilized people, far from modernity. One who is backward in his way of life, or far from catching up ways and styles in city life living' (1990: 42).
4. The names of villagers have been changed.
5. Such *libritos* with supernatural properties are commonly mentioned in the literature—see for instance McCoy (1982) or Meñez (1996). Demetrio (1972) gives the following description of a copy he has had the opportunity to examine:

The booklet is only 2.5 inches long, 2 inches wide, and ½ inch thick. . . . The booklet mingles sense with nonsense. It appeals to God, to the Trinity of Christians, to the traditional saints venerated by Catholics, and to other 'saints' known only in this booklet: St. Marlom and St. Berenciana. It uses scraps of Latin prayers from the Roman Missal, broken pieces from the vulgate Bible and from orthodox Spanish prayers, a dash of Bisayan and a generous heaping of gibberish and jingle.

The potency ascribed to Latin in the Philippines is great, and is remarkably similar to what Peletz describes for Arabic in a Muslim Malayan society (1993: 154–5).

6. Siquijor is renowned as a center of witchcraft, magic and faith healing. Camiguin, the first stop on Santos's quest for supernatural powers, is known as a place of supernatural beings (especially *wokwok*, usually translated as witches), at least among Boholanons.
7. Santos's story of his quest for the talisman, which involves leaving the local village for the unknown, to return as a powerful person, tallies well with Errington's description of the journey as a symbolic, power-seeking experience common to large areas of insular Southeast Asia. This is termed *merantau* in Indonesia (Errington, 1989: 292). It seems probable that Philippine international labor migration could be analyzed in the same perspective (for instance, see Rugkåsa, 1997: ch. 5, on empowered objects from abroad). Errington further postulates that in insular Southeast Asia, potency is actually 'a sexually neutral energy', but as men have the advantage of greater mobility, they are the ones who are able to harness the lion's share of this potency (1989: 292). As Philippine labor migration is becoming increasingly feminized, it would be interesting to investigate what kind of effects, if any, this has on 'the sexual division of potency'.
8. *Barrio* is the previous term for the current *barangay*. The police lieutenant of the *barrio* was the head of six men charged with maintaining public order during public arrangements, such as Saturday night dances.
9. Equivalent to today's *barangay* captain, the *teniente del barrio* was an elected head of the *barangay*.

10. To serve food and drinks to as many and as distinguished visitors as possible can be said to be the primary objective of most residents during the *barangay fiesta*. Being visited by such dignitaries signifies that the host enjoys a highly respected position.
11. This is an image of the Virgin Mary in Philippine traditional dress, highly venerated in the Philippines.
12. Such caves are known to be the home of the *engkanto*; they are naturally much-feared places.
13. On one occasion, I was also told that Bayardo, together with his first wife, had ingested mercury to receive added magical protection. This was supposedly why he has no children in any of his marriages—mercury is also believed to have contraceptive properties.
14. This account of Francisco Salazar is based on Ferandos (1981), Israel (1970), Ramos (1989), and Putong (1965).
15. This emphasis on local specificity could undoubtedly have been carried further, and differences between Philippine localities could have been analyzed. McCoy, for instance, suggests that there are differences between the Visayan region and the Tagalog area with regard to what he calls peasant animist beliefs, and that these differences translate into different organizational forms between the areas (1982: 180–4). One could probably find similar differences with respect to ideas about amulets and ascetic practices. On the other hand, Fegan has warned against exaggerating the differences between beliefs of the Tagalog and Visayan areas (Fegan, 1983).
16. These reflections on sacrifice are inspired by Rugkåsa (1997 and personal communication).
17. The logic is the same concerning the offerings to spirits (*engkanto*) still performed by some Ginopolans. The term ‘sacrifice’ (*sakripisyo*) is not used in this connection, however.
18. On Bohol, those who possess an *anting-anting* will leave it with the image of the dead Christ while this is being wheeled around town in the Good Friday procession, in order to ‘recharge’ the amulet.
19. This is an example of the use of elements from Catholicism for purposes that diverge from those of the Church. The case parallels Iletto’s description of how the story of Christ was used as a ‘manifesto’ for opposition to colonialism. Rafael offers another example when he describes how early Tagalog converts to Catholicism eagerly embraced confession as a ritual of sacrifice, to the extent of inventing sins they had never committed in order to give an extensive offering, much to the concern of the priests (Rafael, 1988: ch. 3).
20. Rugkåsa shows how the idiom of sacrifice was pervasive in speaking about international labor migration in the small town in Central Luzon where she did fieldwork. As ‘Overseas Contract Work’ was seen to imply the undergoing of hardships for the sake of one’s family, with the aim of bringing material rewards, it was eminently suited to be spoken of in terms of sacrifice. Rugkåsa (1997) explicitly links this to the parallel discourse surrounding the Easter self-flagellation practiced in the community.
21. *Barangay* captains and councilmen are locally elected officials.
22. It is reported from several places in the Philippines that different kinds of healers speak of their work in terms of sacrifice (*sacrificio*, *sakripisyo*):

- Israel-Sobritchea for Cebu (1996); Cannell for Bicol (1995: 387), Fegan for Central Luzon (personal communication).
23. The exception is the traditional birth attendants, who set a fixed rate for their consultations.
 24. This argument is explored further in Borchgrevink (1999: 260–5). The same logic is found in the Philippine concept of ‘debt of gratitude’ (*utang na loób*, *utang kabubutan*), on which there is a sizeable literature (see, for instance, Cannell, 1999; Hollnsteiner, 1963; Iletto, 1989; Kaut, 1961; Quisumbing, 1975; Rafael, 1988).
 25. The local expression *sakay sa panahon* might very well be given the same translation as Anderson gives *pamrih*—having a concealed personal motive. (Literally, it translates more or less as ‘riding the times’.) One context in which the expression cropped up was when people were speaking of the NPA. Surprisingly, even though they would constantly emphasize the fear they had of the guerrillas, the burden the revolutionary tax meant, and demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of the movement’s revolutionary ideology, most would nevertheless characterize ‘the real NPAs’ as morally good persons, even *very* good persons. But then again, they would say, there were also those who posed as NPAs but were in it only for personal gain. Whatever they could exact from the peasants they would take for themselves. About such persons, the expression *sakay sa panahon* was invariably used, and implied strong moral condemnation. Conversely, it would seem that ‘the real NPAs’ were seen as good persons precisely because of the selflessness they showed in accepting the hardships of guerrilla life for the sake of what they perceive as a common good. This complex attitude towards the NPA is understandable in a cultural context where selflessness is highly valued.
 26. On the contrary, male sexual promiscuity may also be seen as indicative of supernatural powers. Some of the gender implications of the case of Bayardo are discussed in Borchgrevink (2000: 14–15).
 27. Errington prefers the term ‘potency’ to Anderson’s ‘Power’ in order to avoid some of the connotations attached to the latter concept. However, she makes it clear that she is referring to precisely the same thing.

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